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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

## INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY USSR

REPORT

SUBJECT Soviet Army Medical Organization and Practices/  
Experiences of the 821st Infantry Regiment

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1.

the 821st Infantry Regiment of the 398th Infantry Division in Kirovabad, Azerbaijan, USSR. The regiment numbered about 3500 officers and men. The medical organization was as follows. There was one chief regimental doctor. His assistant was commanding officer of the medical company, or "Komandir Sanitarnii Roti." There were three other MD's, one for each battalion. The medical company consisted of 55 men and women: 29 orderlies ("sanitateri"), 17 ambulance drivers ("povozochni"), six nurses, and three "feldschers" (partially qualified doctors). The ambulances were horse drawn. The regiment was short of medicine and of food. The shortage of medicine was very serious. Iodine and only very little morphine (the USSR, in 1943 or 1944, was given large quantities of morphine by the US).

50X1-HUM

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2. A brief resumé of the history of our regiment will illustrate the lack of medical facilities and the very low state of morale of Soviet troops, at least as of 1941 and 1942. Five Soviet divisions were formed from inhabitants of the Caucasus, the 398, 396, 404, 77, and 38. the 398th, included the 821, 824, and 826th Regiments. The division, at various times between August 1941 and May 1942, came under the 44th, 47th, or 51st Army. Of the troops in regiment, only about half of one per cent wanted to fight. this was typical of other Soviet Army units at that time, at least in the south. The 398th Infantry Division was formed at Kirovabad, Azerbaijan, USSR during August and September 1941. It remained there until 1 Nov 41, when it moved to Buinaksk, Dagestan, USSR. During December 1941, it was stationed at Temryuk, Kuban, USSR. In late 1941, it crossed on the ice to an area near Kerch in the Crimea. By late January 1942, it was in the line, just east of Fyeodosiya. It was in combat from February until May 1942, when it was captured by the Germans.

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3. Food was bad and in short supply. In February 1942, rains melted the ice in the straits and there was extremely little food for 40 days, because of lack of adequate transportation facilities and German bombing. More than 2000 starved to death in regiment. Many soldiers ate less than the bare minimum in order to avoid combat. The sick were sent back on foot to the division hospital. Four-fifths of these died en route. Lice were extremely numerous. The troops caught typhus exanthematicus from the lice. The troops at times stole grain from the local peasants. The bread was

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- 2 -

50X1-HUM

50X1-HUM

50X1-HUM

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- frozen because of the cold. [ ] forces had no aircraft or tanks. Replacements arrived on foot.
4. On 13 March 1942 [ ] division attacked, although the troops had no will to fight. [ ] regiment had between 600 and 700 wounded in one day. [ ] lack of medicines was complete. The regimental wounded were treated about four or five kilometers to rear. The wounded complained mostly about hunger. When the abortive attack was over (no ground was gained), [ ] regiment had lost about 90 % of its strength in killed and wounded. [ ] lacked transportation to evacuate the wounded. There was no time to bury the dead and they were frozen by the cold. In effect, we provided only first aid on the regimental level. The division hospital, or "METSAMBAT" ("meditsinskii sanitarnii battalion") did any needed surgery. Some litters, mounted on two or four rubber wheels, were utilized. Each casualty was given a paper, after being registered by a regimental MD, and was then sent to the division hospital. During the attack, many soldiers suffered self-inflicted wounds. The great majority of unit commanders were killed by their own soldiers.
5. On 17 March 1942, the regiment retreated out of the line. By that time, [ ] each battalion had only about 10 or 20 effectives. Another regiment took the place of the 821st in the line. The 821st spent about two weeks in a rest area. Replacements arrived, but only enough to bring up the strength of each battalion to about 200 effectives. The regiment moved back into the line in April 1942. Additional Soviet divisions were brought up. On 7 and 8 May 1942, the Soviet troops came under German aerial bombardment and artillery attack. Rear areas were also bombed. Thirty members of my medical company were killed, as well as all 12 horses. German ground forces attacked and on 12 May 1942 [ ] division was ordered to retreat 40 kilometers. Three or four divisions were crowded together in the retreat in that particular area, which was under German bombardment. The battle ended in the capture of 170,000 Soviet troops.

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